

Camp Kahlert

by Penny Blackledge Woods

On 1 Jan 2015, I emailed my sister Penny to see if she could provide any details about this photo of the young twins: who were they with, where was it taken, and their approximate age. Her response:



This is a tough one. I might have this photo or a similar one in the old scrapbook.

Notice certain things about the photo to figure how who, what, and when. Mine is a guess, but probably fairly accurate.

We're dressed up. The person between us is "in charge". I guess she's a camp counselor and we're wearing our "whites" because it's Sunday and we're about to get scrambled eggs and bacon in the mess hall. It's probably visiting day and that explains the bow in my hair. Someone obviously "did" our hair for us, maybe the nice counselor standing in between.

Patti [then called Patsy] is still taller than I am which means it's before we were 15. I think we're about 9 here.

This is the camp that we made it to Third Float in swimming, which is the best you can do. Patti dived off the big green float one day and hit a submerged log covered with barnacles. Her

shoulder was badly cut and bleeding. She rose back to the murky surface of the Chesapeake Bay waters and was groggy.

Luckily, an alert counselor pulled her out. The camp nurse taped her shoulder together, but it actually required stitches and about two or three years after this, she had official surgery on the shoulder which explains why her left shoulder carries an impressive vertical scar. (How she got a matching scar on her other shoulder is another story).

The camp has to be the Girl Scout camp, Camp Kahlert, we went to located on the Chesapeake Bay in the state of Maryland. We were transported to and from the camp on a big bus from the downtown "Y" in Washington D.C.

At this camp, I got a bee sting so severe that my foot swelled up triple size. I had to stay in bed at the Nurse's cabin on the screened-in porch and wait for the swelling to go down. One day, I hopped to the nearby outhouse, a two-seater with a separating divider. When I sat down, I saw a giant snake coiled up under the separating partition. It was inches from my foot.

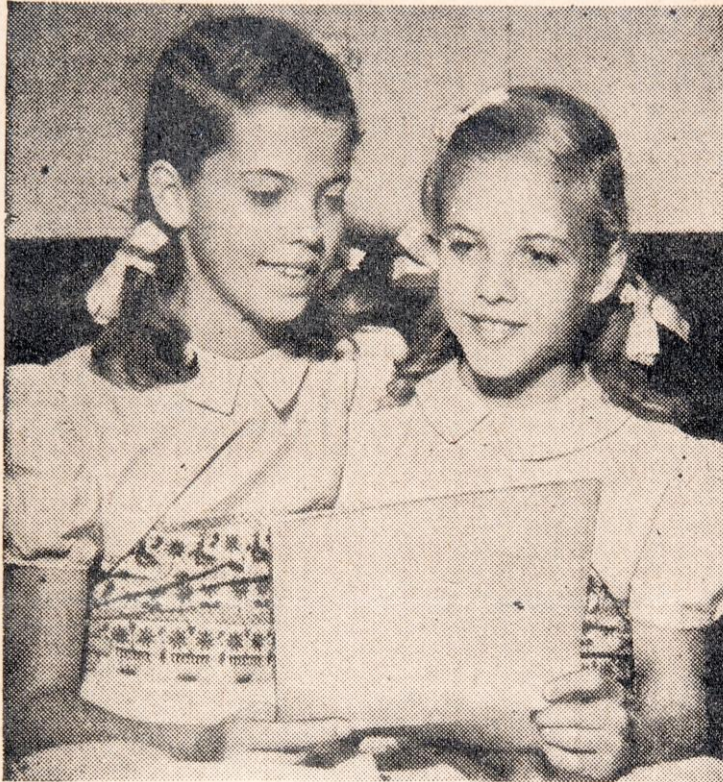
You never saw any one move so fast, hopping and on a crutch, as I screamed bloody murder and tumbled out of the outhouse door. It was Rest Hour, but I didn't care. Counselors came running. Someone killed the snake, but I don't remember how.

An aside: Maybe it was a water moccasin, but then again, I'm probably thinking of Camp Mystic in Hunt, Texas, where I was a counselor after my freshman year at Rice. We believed the swimming was "safe" at Camp Mystic because we were told that snakes don't bite under water.

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The Junior Star

Twins Write Twin Stories Of Fun at Camp Kahlert



Patsy and Penny Blackledge go over their stories.

—Junior Star Photo.

Prize Contribution
By Patsy Blackledge, 10
Phoebe Hearst School

I was really very excited when I saw Camp Kahlert. In among the beautiful green trees were little brown wooden cabins. All the girls of the same age lived together. For instance, I lived with the 10-year-olds in cabin 7, and, as we were the youngest group in the camp, we were called "Bitsies."

Our favorite sport was swimming, and we were allowed to swim twice a day in the West River. We knew this was an inlet from the Chesapeake, as we had studied the Bay region last year in the fourth grade. In the morning, we would have swimming lessons, and in the afternoon, it would be "dip period." Each one had a buddy in the water, and when the lifeguard blew her whistle two times, each of us would hold up her buddy's hand so she could see no one was missing. One day when I was in swimming, I walked under one of the floats and a crab bit my toe. Believe me, I never went under there again. I am glad to say that almost every girl in our cabin won her Red Cross beginner's swimming certificate.

Now I would like to tell you about one of my favorite days at camp, called "peanut day." Every one drew a name out of a box and no one knew who had her name. Each person was to do good deeds in secret for the "peanut" whose name she had drawn. My peanut picked me a big bunch of black-eyed susans, wrote me a verse, made my bed and swept under it for me.

Another thing that was fun on one of our after-dinner programs was "Glamour, Incorporated." Those who were interested went over to one of the larger cabins and there one of the counselors put bright red finger-nail polish on us, beautiful lipstick to match and sweet-smelling perfume. She told us how to brush our hair 100 strokes a day to make it real fluffy and beautiful.

I am still enjoying camp, even though I'm home, because before I go to sleep at night I have fun just thinking about the things I used to do there.

Prize Contribution
By Penny Blackledge, 10
Phoebe Hearst School

Gee, we really had the time of our lives at Camp Kahlert. There were so many things to do—not a dull moment. For instance, crafts, swimming, tennis, archery, hikes, cook-outs, dramatics, ping-pong, jacks and baseball (which I especially liked).

The meals were simply scrumptious! Here is one of our breakfasts—cornflakes with bananas and milk, water, cocoa, and toast with melted butter and jam. We got ice cream every single Sunday. But, of course, out of all these things, Mother's fried chicken, and Daddy's fried eggs are still tops with me.

We had a cook-out every Thursday, rain or shine. On one of our cook-outs, we had hotdogs, potato chips, punch, peaches and a peanut butter sandwich. We also had sparklers (not to eat, of course) because it was the Fourth of July.

After dinner each night we would have a program. Once, we had "baby night." Everybody was supposed to dress up as a baby. There was a contest to see which baby could crawl the fastest, which could bawl the loudest, and which could finish its water first, etc. At the end of the program the camp doctor said it was very late for babies to be up, and we must go right to our cribs and go to sleep. At this statement, all the "babies" started crying as loud as possible.

Another night, we had a carnival. That was more fun! It cost a penny a ticket. It was really for the benefit of the little war orphan Camp Kahlert had adopted. There was a sideshow, wonder-house, a bowling alley, fortune-telling booth, your weight guessed—we also tried to drop pennies into a jar top which floated on the water. If you got the penny in, you could have it back again.

Last of all, the spook house, and that's what I especially liked. You had to go in blindfolded and barefooted, and every one before me said: "There are worms all over the floor in there."

Finally, I noticed that one of my friends walked out with spaghetti on her toes, so then I knew what the "worms" were. When I went in, they made me hold a "giant's eyeball." I think it was just a squashy tomato. The thing I liked best about the spook house was the shrieks and screams of the so-called ghosts.

Of course, it wouldn't seem like camp if you didn't get a bee sting, and I really got a whopper right on my toe.

They bite above water and you can always see them coming. Very funny. At Camp Mystic I earned \$50 for six weeks as a counselor. I shot my entire wad on a pink leather jacket which I wore for many years.

Back to the photo:

When we returned from the camp, Mother had us write it up and eventually it was in the Washington Star newspaper, along with our photos. Miss Williams at Phoebe Hearst Elementary School put it on the bulletin board. This means we were in 4th grade by that time and the year was 1944, which means we were 9-ish.

The following summer, 1945, Mother sent us to Mr. and Mrs. White's farm in Herndon, Virginia. Patti had to go home early because she ate too much corn and was sick to her stomach. But she got to witness the end of WW II celebration downtown which occurred simultaneously. That writeup got our pictures plus a cartoon in the paper again and I remember we were in 5th grade where we had Miss Duvall. Miss Duvall was famous for featuring the Christmas play, Scrooge. David Radue won the main part, but most everyone else was "something" in the play. Miss Williams was remembered for having us copy the poem, "*Hiawatha*" by Longfellow, day after day after day. "*On the shores of Gitchee Goomie, stood a . . .*" etc. Miss Williams emphasized the lilting rhythm of the poem.

Probably more information than you wanted, but my memories got carried away.

Love and blessings, Penn



← Another photo from Camp Kahlert. This one captures the twins with a visit from their Dad, ADB. (the 'real' counselor).



Swimming time at Camp Kahlert. Patsy poses at left; below, the twins with another counselor (circa 1944).



Camp Kahlert history

Article from *The Capital*, (Annapolis MD) 5 Dec 1996, page 16

Revamped camp keeps emphasis on peace, quiet

by MARY ALLEN *South County Staff Writer*

When an area church conference bought the West River Center 45 years ago, it was a rustic summer camp with a burned-out kitchen and no screens on the cabin windows. Today, the landmark is known as a camp, retreat and conference center that draws more than 15,000 visitors each year. But the center has managed to maintain its sought-after solitude, despite a boom in West River home building. "It's a really renewing experience for folks," center Director Andy Thornton said. "Just the opportunity to get apart from your daily routine has tremendous value for re-energizing." The Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church manages the 45-acre parcel, which includes a mile of waterfront. It paid \$60,000 for the property in 1951; the center will celebrate its 45th anniversary with a dinner on Saturday. **Once known as Kamp Kahlert, the camp was a YWCA outfit with more buildings than the 15 on site now.**



The center was first known as TheTVieinoaisi Church Camp, run by the Rev. Thomas B. Ehlers. His daughter, Galesville resident Dotty Harvey, was an assistant director for eight years, and today works as a volunteer, including a stint last summer as counselor to the fishing camp. "They're amazed by this openness that includes both the greenery and the water," she said of visitors. The facility maintains an ambitious schedule that benefits people of many denominations. There are nine separate weeks of summer camp available to children, with Capital graphic themes ranging from music to sailing to camp for deaf youth. With room to sleep 210, it is a place that draws everything from weekend quilting retreats to family reunions to day visits from county school groups. It also is a meeting place for organizations like the Boy Scouts and the West River Estates Homeowners Association. It is opened to the public on summer Sundays, and the facility has a nature center and three hiking trails used primarily by campers.

Mr. Thornton said a turning point came in 1981 with the construction of a winterized retreat building, which made the facility available year-round. Since then, the old cabins have been demolished to make way for new models. Meanwhile, developers have been building homes around the camp for years. That hasn't affected the ambiance of the center, though, Mr. Thornton said.

